

Amherst Community Development Committee
Public Hearing September 17, 2008
For Community Development Block Grant funding

The Amherst Community Development Committee met in room 101, Bangs Center beginning at 6:35 p.m. on September 17, 2008 for a Public Hearing concerning the Community Development Block Grant funding.

Committee members present were: Claude Tellier, Mary Jane Laus, Jana McClure, Isaac BenEzra, and Paulette Brooks.

Town staff represented was: Roy Rosenblatt.

Community members present were: Scott Merzbach, Donna Crabtree, Carolyn Holstein, Stan Maron, Michelle Morris, and Seren Derin

Mary Jane Laus opened the hearing at 6:35 by welcoming everyone to the meeting. Mr. Rosenblatt then gave a 5 minute presentation describing the past CDBG funding, the mini-entitlement and transition status of the town at different times, the Valley Development Corporation's 11 new rental units, Family Outreach of Amherst's grant funding, Childcare Tuition Assistance, update on the Chestnut court kitchen project, and Bangs Center elevator access issue. Mr. Rosenblatt also discussed the 2008 funding, the repairs to the North Amherst School, and the embedded regulations for available funding to be only used for housing activities. The committee will hold another hearing for the 2009 grant. Today's public hearing specifically requested community input for approximately \$140,000 that may be available out of the \$800,000. grant monies in FY 2008.

Seren Derin, as a member of the Amherst Disability Committee and Stavros proposed the available funding be used for the needed sidewalk repairs on Main Street. Carolyn Holstein presented the committee with the Town price estimate for sidewalk repair from Watson Farms to Churchill Street of \$129,564. *See: attached.* Mr. BenEzra inquired whether the sidewalk repair was part of the transition plan. Ms. Derin also informed the committee of two incidents where the sidewalks were hazardous to disabled persons, and read a portion of a letter from the director of Stavros. *See attached.*

Michelle Morris, speaking for the Valley Community Development Committee, updated the committee about the first time home buyer program. *See: summary attached.* The committee discussed the foreclosure problems and the idea of a Community Rescue fund for people in jeopardy of losing their homes. The Pennsylvania Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program was discussed as a role model.

Donna Crabtree, a representative of the Amherst Housing Authority, requested the funds be used for paving the shared driveway between the new main street project and Watson farms. She estimated the cost to be \$47,000. The Housing Authority would like the entire driveway to be paved but cannot fund the entire project. There have been 178 applicants for the 11 available units.

Ms. Derin also discussed the ADA compliance, sidewalk obstacle in precinct 7. She is working with the Town Manager to address the issue.

Mr. Rosenblatt updated everyone on the feasibility study for solutions to homelessness. Mr. Maron, as a member of the Amherst Homelessness Committee informed everyone of past surveys documenting need. The discussion that followed included a Single Room Occupancy (SRO) solution, Vouchers, and the lack of adequate or available buildings in Amherst.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.